

Decision 05-04-021 April 7, 2005

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Application of San Diego Gas & Electric
Company (U 902 E) for a Permit to Construct the
Grant Hill Substation, formerly known as the
Uptown Substation.

Application 04-03-015
(Filed March 8, 2004)

OPINION GRANTING APPLICATION

This decision grants the application of San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) for a Permit to Construct (PTC), pursuant to General Order (GO) 131-D, the new Grant Hill Substation, which has previously been referred to as the Uptown Substation.¹ The new substation will have a capacity of 120 megavolt amperes (MVA) and is needed to meet existing and anticipated load growth and to improve distribution reliability in downtown San Diego, the western portion of the Southeast San Diego community, and portions of the Golden Hill community.

The application is unopposed. Commission staff has conducted an environmental review of the project and proposed a Mitigated Negative

¹ As noted on page A-1, footnote 1 of the Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) concerning the project, the Southeastern San Diego Planning Committee requested the name change. At the prehearing conference (PHC) held on August 27, 2004, SDG&E agreed that the name change was appropriate. (PHC Transcript, p. 10.) The caption of this decision references both the old and new names for the project so as to avoid confusion.

Declaration which concludes that, if SDG&E implements the mitigation measures set forth therein, the project will not have any significant effects upon the environment. Our order today adopts the Final IS/MND and, subject to the conditions therein, authorizes work on the substation to begin.

A. Procedural Background

SDG&E filed the instant application on March 8, 2004. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which appears at Pub. Resources Code §§ 21000-21176, the utility also submitted a Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA), which evaluated the potential environmental impacts of the proposed project. The PEA concluded that, with the implementation of specified mitigation measures, the substation would have no significant impact upon the environment.

By letter dated April 29, 2004, the Commission's Energy Division informed SDG&E that the PEA was incomplete, and directed the utility to file additional information. SDG&E did so in a supplemental application filed on June 1, 2004. On August 3, 2004, the Energy Division informed SDG&E by letter that the application was deemed complete. A short PHC was held on August 27, 2004.

On September 27, 2004, the Energy Division issued the Draft IS/MND for public comment; the public was invited to submit comments for the next 30 days. The comment period closed on October 27, 2004, and after making various changes in response to the comments received, a Final IS/MND was issued on December 23, 2004.

B. The Proposed Project

The proposed substation will be built on a 2.6 acre parcel located in the vicinity of State Route (SR) 94 and 30th Street in the community of Grant Hill, which is located in the Southeast San Diego Community Plan area of the City of

San Diego (City). The parcel is bounded on the north by SR 94, on the east by 30th Street, on the west by vacant land, and on the south by several commercial uses, including a residential care facility. Included within the proposed site is SDG&E's existing Golden Hill 12/4 Kilovolt (kV) substation, which will be dismantled and moved as construction on the new substation proceeds.

The new substation will be configured as a 120 MVA, 138/12 kV low profile design consisting of four low profile, low sound 30 MVA transformers, four sections of switchgear to accommodate sixteen 12 kV circuits, and four 12 kV metal enclosed capacitors. The design of the distribution equipment is also low profile, with a maximum equipment height of approximately 15 feet. The transmission component will include four 138 kV switch stand structures, a low profile 138 kV bus, and nine 138 kV circuit breakers.

The 2.6 acre parcel measures approximately 280 by 285 feet. In addition to retaining walls around the site (which will vary in height depending on the topography), a 12-foot high screening wall will enclose the substation area to screen the transformers and distribution circuits from public view. The retaining walls will be constructed of concrete keystone block, and both those walls and the screening wall will be earth-toned. In addition, the screening wall will be non-reflective and covered with an anti-graffiti coating.

The new substation will be unmanned and operated remotely from SDG&E's central operations facilities. The principal lighting will consist of a 100 watt outside floodlight installed at the entry gate, although there will also be six 300-watt tungsten quartz lamps inside the station for use if a "troubleman" requires emergency lighting. SDG&E expects that these six lamps are unlikely to be used more than once per year, and that routine maintenance of the substation will require about four trips per year with a two- to four-person crew.

A 25 foot setback for landscaping will be provided along 30th Street, and landscaping will be installed that complies with the City's landscape guidelines. At the request of the City, vehicular access to the site will be provided along the western side of the perimeter wall.

Construction of the new substation is expected to take about 18 months. During that time, the work to be done includes (1) demolition of the six residences and single commercial structure within the project site, (2) relocation of the existing occupants of the residences, (3) clearing and grading of the site, (4) dismantling and removal of the existing Golden Hill substation equipment and foundations, and the transfer of some of this equipment to new transformers located within the site boundary, (5) construction of the perimeter wall, substation and related transmission and distribution facilities,² and (6) installation of landscaping and irrigation.

² As the Draft IS/MND notes, transmission power for the new substation will come from an existing overhead 138 kV line located along 26th Street and Broadway, about one-half mile from the proposed site. This line would be routed from overhead to underground before entering the new substation. (*See*, Draft IS/MND, p. B.1-7 and Figure B.1-6.) The work needed to bring the 138 kV line into the substation will be going on at the same time as a separate but related transmission project being implemented by the City, the 30th Street Overhead to Underground Conversion Project. (*Id.*)

Although the Draft IS/MND did not study electromagnetic fields (EMFs) as a potential environmental impact under CEQA (because there is no agreement among scientists that EMFs pose a health risk, nor are there any CEQA standards for assessing the health risks allegedly associated with EMFs), SDG&E's application does propose to implement two of the "no cost" options for reducing EMFs identified as a result of Decision (D.) 93-11-013. Under the "Magnetic Field Management Plan" included with the application as Appendix E, SDG&E will underground the new 138 kV transmission line to the Grant Hill Substation, and will change the phase configuration of the line to CBA top-to-bottom. SDG&E estimates that these two measures will reduce magnetic field levels for

Footnote continued on next page

In addition to the PTC required from this Commission, SDG&E will also be required to obtain the following approvals from the City: (a) Street Improvement Permits for the construction along 30th Street, (b) temporary construction permits for the grading activities, and (c) a plan check and review.

C. Need for the Grant Hill Substation

According to the supplementary information filed by SDG&E, the Grant Hill Substation is needed because the three substations that currently serve downtown San Diego will have an aggregate loading of 93% in 2006, and are expected to be fully loaded in 2010. At the same time, a recent forecast prepared by the San Diego Association of Governments projects that the City's population will increase by approximately 147,000 people between 2000 and 2010, and the statistical area that includes Southeast San Diego -- where the new substation will be located -- is expected to experience a population increase of more than 48,000 people between 2000 and 2010.

In view of this anticipated growth, SDG&E asserts that the new substation is needed to provide capacity and reliability support for downtown San Diego, the western portion of the Southeast San Diego community and portions of the Golden Hill community. According to SDG&E, the new substation will help prevent extended outages and other disruptions of service to new and existing customers, as well as contribute to distribution system operating flexibility in the affected areas.

those segments of the project for which the two measures are feasible somewhere between 60% and 97%. (*See*, PEA, pp. 104-106; Draft IS/MND, pp. B.1-16 to B.1-23; Final IS/MND, pp. B-21 to B-22.)

D. Environmental Review

Under CEQA, this Commission is considered the lead agency for the Grant Hill Substation project. As noted above, SDG&E included a PEA as an exhibit to its application, as required by Rule 17.1 of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure. In its PEA, SDG&E concluded that the project (then known as the Uptown Substation Project) would have no significant unmitigatable impact upon the environment. As noted in the Procedural Summary, the Commission's staff concluded that the PEA was incomplete, and asked for additional data on April 30, 2004.

On September 27, 2004, after the requested data had been provided, the Commission released the Draft IS/MND for public review and comment, in compliance with CEQA and Rule 17.1. The Draft IS/MND was filed with the State Clearinghouse on September 24, 2004, and the 30-day review and comment period closed on October 27, 2004. Comments on the Draft IS/MND were received from the following parties:

1. San Diego County Regional Airport Authority;
2. San Diego County Archaeological Society, Inc.;
3. SDG&E;
4. California Department of Transportation;
5. Environmental Health Coalition; and
6. California Department of Toxic Substances Control.

Based on these comments, Commission staff prepared a Final IS/MND, which was issued on December 23, 2004. The Final IS/MND concludes that the Grant Hill Substation Project will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment, because mitigation measures incorporated by SDG&E into the project, when combined with additional mitigation measures suggested by staff

to which SDG&E has agreed, will ensure that any potentially significant effects that have been identified with the project will remain at less-than-significant levels.

As part of this decision, the Draft IS/MND and the Final IS/MND will be received into the record. The latter is available for inspection on the Commission's website, www.cpuc.ca.gov, by clicking on "Regulated Areas," "Environment," and then "Current Projects."

E. Categorization

In Resolution ALJ 176-3131, dated April 1, 2004, we preliminarily determined that this proceeding should be categorized as ratesetting, and that a hearing was not necessary. Those determinations are hereby confirmed.

F. Comments on Draft Decision

This is an uncontested matter in which the decision grants the relief requested. Pursuant to Pub. Util. Code § 311(g)(2), the otherwise applicable 30-day comment period for public review and comment is hereby waived.

G. Assignment of Proceeding

Geoffrey F. Brown is the Assigned Commissioner and A. Kirk McKenzie is the assigned Administrative Law Judge in this proceeding.

Findings of Fact

1. This application is uncontested.
2. At the PHC held on August 27, 2004, SDG&E requested that the name of instant project should be changed from the Uptown Substation Project to the Grant Hill Substation Project.
3. In view of anticipated customer growth and the expectation that the three SDG&E substations serving downtown San Diego will be fully loaded in 2010, the Grant Hill Substation Project will enable SDG&E to continue providing

capacity and reliability support for downtown San Diego, as well as increasing the operating flexibility of SDG&E's distribution system. The project will also provide capacity and reliability support for the western portion of the Southeast San Diego community and portions of the Golden Hill community.

4. The Final IS/MND reflects the independent judgment of this Commission.

5. The Final IS/MND conforms to the requirements of CEQA.

6. The Final IS/MND identified no significant environmental effects of the Grant Hill Substation Project that could not be avoided or reduced to non-significant levels by implementing the project as described, with the mitigation measures agreed to by SDG&E in the Final IS/MND.

7. The Commission has considered the Final IS/MND in deciding to approve the Grant Hill Substation Project.

8. Based on the mitigation measures included in the Final IS/MND, the Grant Hill Substation Project will not have a significant effect upon the environment.

9. The Grant Hill Substation Project includes no-cost measures (within the meaning of D.93-11-013) to reduce exposures to EMFs.

10. In order for SDG&E to construct the Grant Hill Substation Project, it must obtain street improvement permits, temporary construction permits and a plan check and review from the City.

Conclusions of Law

1. The motion of SDG&E to change the name of the instant project from the Uptown Substation Project to the Grant Hill Substation Project, and to make appropriate changes to the caption for this proceeding, should be granted.

2. This application is uncontested and a public hearing is not necessary.

3. The Final IS/MND has been processed in compliance with the requirements of CEQA.

4. The Final IS/MND has been completed in compliance with the requirements of CEQA.
5. The Draft IS/MND and the Final IS/MND should be received into the record of this proceeding.
6. Permits from the City for street improvements and temporary construction, as well as a plan check and review, are necessary before the Grant Hill Substation Project can be constructed.
7. SDG&E's application for a PTC for the Grant Hill Substation Project should be approved, subject to the mitigation measures set out in Final IS/MND and to SDG&E's obtaining all of the above-described permits from the City.
8. In order to allow construction of the Grant Hill Substation Project to proceed expeditiously, this order should be effective immediately.

O R D E R

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The motion of applicant San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) to change the name of the instant project from the Uptown Substation Project to the Grant Hill Substation Project, and to make commensurate changes to the caption for this proceeding, is granted.
2. The Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (Draft IS/MND) for the Uptown Substation Project, now known as the Grant Hill Substation Project, is received into the record of this proceeding.
3. The Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (Final IS/MND) for the Uptown Substation Project, now known as the Grant Hill Substation Project, is received into the record of this proceeding.

4. The Final MND is adopted pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, Pub. Res. Code §§ 21000 *et seq.*

5. SDG&E is granted a Permit to Construct the Grant Hill Substation Project, formerly known as the Uptown Substation Project, subject to the mitigation measures set out in the Final MND and the necessary permits and approvals from the City of San Diego (City).

6. SDG&E may not undertake any work on the substation site for the Grant Hill Substation Project, formerly known as the Uptown Substation Project, until all necessary permits and approvals from City have been obtained.

7. Application 04-03-015 is closed.

This order is effective today.

Dated April 7, 2005, at San Francisco, California.

MICHAEL R. PEEVEY
President
GEOFFREY F. BROWN
SUSAN P. KENNEDY
DIAN M. GRUENEICH
Commissioners